

AN
ADDRESS
FROM THE
PRESBYTERY OF ORANGE,
TO THE
CHURCHES UNDER THEIR CARE,
ON THE SUBJECT OF
EDUCATING POOR AND PIous YOUTH,
FOR THE
GOSPEL MINISTRY,

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1806.

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The Presbytery of Orange, in North-Carolina, to the Churches under their care, and to all others, with grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from the Divine Spirit.

DEAR BRETHREN,

IT has been, for many years, a source of growing concern with numerous friends of our Church, that the interests of religion among us are greatly suffering for want of an additional supply of pious, faithful, and able Ministers of the Gospel. It is well known that many parts of our state has long been wholly destitute of Evangelical instruction; that those parts in which congregations are regularly formed, have been inadequately supplied with the means of grace and spiritual improvement; that the population of our country is rapidly increasing, and that new churches, in quick succession have been rising into view; while the number of our Ministers has been but slowly enlarged, and is altogether incommensurate with the growing demand for their services. This deficiency has become serious and alarming. Important congregations which have long enjoyed the ministrations of the Gospel, when they become vacant, have been with the utmost difficulty supplied with pastors. Large districts, within the bounds of old settlements, in which Churches might easily be planted, and where Ministers would meet with a cordial welcome, are lying waste for want of their labours; and more than one thousand congregations, on the extensive frontier of the United States, as well informed persons have asserted, are able and

willing to support spiritual teachers, but cry for them in vain.

A deficiency so long deplored, and so evidently growing, has at length engaged the serious attention of the supreme judicatory of our Church. The General Assembly, at their last sessions, received, and directed the publication of an interesting Overture on this subject. This Overture, after stating in strong and affecting language, the deficiency complained of, recommends that exertions be made by the respective Presbyteries to remedy the evil. It proposes that each Presbytery should undertake to look out for the most promising characters among the pious youth within its knowledge; to conduct those who may be selected through their academical and theological studies; and, during this course, to furnish them with the means of support, either in whole or in part, as their circumstances may require, and as the resources of the Presbytery may render practicable.

The Presbytery of New-York having taken this Overture of the Assembly into serious consideration, have resolved to adopt the plan which it recommends.

The Presbytery of Orange, animated by a strong solicitude to do what is in their power in promoting an object so full of Christian love, and pious concern for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, have resolved at their last session, to conform without delay to the benevolent directions they have received from the General Assembly, and to imitate so worthy an example as has been exhibited by their brethren of New-York. In addressing themselves to the congregations which are under their charge, and to o-

thers who may be disposed to favor their wishes, they have thought it proper to adopt the language of their brethren, than which they can find none more appropriate, or more fully to express the object and the motives of their determination. In the execution of this plan they are sensible that much prudence, circumspection and watchfulness will be necessary; and they cannot be so unreasonable as to hope that an undertaking of such magnitude will be unattended with difficulty. But deeply affected with the pressing exigencies of the Church; and convinced that the delay of even a single year may prove injurious to its best interests, they cannot forbear to go forward. In the name of Him who is set as King upon the holy hill of Zion, they lift up their banner; in his grace and strength they confide for success; and to those who love his cause they look for encouragement and aid.

To facilitate the accomplishment of their object, the Presbytery contemplate the appointment of a STANDING COMMITTEE of Ministers and Elders, whose duty it shall be to look out for young men—to examine their qualifications—to superintend their academick instruction—to direct their theological studies—and, in general, to do all those things which may be necessary for completing their education. This Committee is to be annually renewed; and, in all its proceedings is to act under the direction of the Presbytery.

This method of introducing young men into the Gospel Ministry will, it is believed, be attended with important advantages. Chosen and educated by the Presbytery, they will be constantly under its inspection and control. Known to the Ministers and congregations belonging to the judicatory, a more than or-

dinary interest will be taken in their support, character, and usefulness. And the youth thus selected and cherished will feel an additional responsibility, and a peculiar excitement to gratify the just expectations of their patrons and benefactors. Nor is it a point of small importance, that while individuals and congregations will be called upon to furnish the means of supporting this system of education, it will lie with them, either personally, or by their representatives, to direct the manner in which their pious liberality shall be appropriated.

For defraying the large expenses which must necessarily be incurred in the execution of this plan, the Presbytery rely on annual collections in the Churches under their care—the liberality of wealthy and charitable individuals—and the bequests of those who may be inclined to remember this object in their last wills. These sources of revenue, it is hoped, will be increasingly productive when the nature and importance of our undertaking shall be generally understood; and especially when it is considered, that if suitable encouragement be afforded, there is every human prospect of the most gratifying success.

Having thus, dear brethren, laid before you the plan suggested by the General Assembly, and on which, after mature deliberation, we have resolved to act, we must entreat your concurrence and aid in its execution. We ask for your prayers and your pecuniary assistance. Without liberal contributions it will be impossible to conduct our undertaking either with vigor or success. The arguments which address themselves to your liberality are of the most interesting and solemn kind. As the friends of vital religion, you can-

not be supposed either to forget or to disregard the importance of the Christian Ministry, to yourselves, to your families, to your country, and to the Church of God. But we wish you to be distinctly apprized, that without prompt and vigorous measures to add to the number of our pious and faithful Ministers, the best interests of our Church, in all probability, must deplorably languish. Many congregations, now large and promising, must fall into decay and dissolution; and thousands of immortal souls, now crying for help, must be left to perish for lack of knowledge. Ye who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity! in contemplating such an awful alternative, is not your tenderest compassion excited—your holy emulation roused—your zeal inflamed—and your love to the Redeemer's kingdom called into lively and beneficent action? To be unaffected with such melancholy prospects, would betray an insensibility of which you cannot be suspected. To repose in sloth when there is so much to be done, is unworthy of those who consider themselves as not their own, but bought with a price, and bound to glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are his.

In this benevolent undertaking, we entertain no doubt that our Sister Presbyteries will cordially and zealously co-operate with us: The call for exertion is so loud and solemn, that it is beginning to be heard by all our judicatories, and, we hope will speedily produce a “general movement” of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. And if it should please the great Head of the Church to smile upon our united efforts, by opening the hearts of Christians to *devise liberal things*—by strengthening our hands

in the arduous enterprize—and by crowning our endeavors with success, what happy result may we not anticipate? May we not hope that the exertions now commenced will form a new and glorious era in the history of our Church;—that the humble beginning now contemplated will prove the means of sending hundreds, and even thousands of pastors to hungering and thirsting souls—and that generations yet unborn will have reason to rise up and call you blessed?

To Pious Young Men.

We feel an earnest desire to call your attention to this important object. You are now just entering on the stage of action, and have arrived at an age when you must shortly choose some profession for life. You have often looked around you, with an anxiety inseparable from piety, and have enquired how you could best employ the powers which God created—the rational souls which Christ redeemed—to the honour of your Father and Savior? You have but one life to live, and how shall that life be spent most to the glory of God and the happiness of men? These questions, which have often arisen amidst your pious meditations, must, in a little time, be decided. The object of this Address is to suggest some considerations which may assist you in forming the great decision.

Has it ever occurred to you, that it may perhaps be the will of God to employ you in the ministry of his Son? Is this a new thought? Yet let it not be dismissed as too extravagant to deserve attention. Place it distinctly before your minds, and examine it on every side. The Church needs, more than she needs any

thing except larger supplies of the divine Spirit, many evangelical and apostolic men added to the number of her present Clergy. If those men are found, they must be found among youth of your spirit. Only such as you can supply materials for future Ministers, such as the interest of the Church requires, such as her necessities pressingly demand. For want of such Ministers, immortal souls are perishing, in our land by thousands, in our world by millions. Let the thought interest and affect your hearts, that the blessed Savior, who requires your service, has passed by other youth and set his love on you. By distinguishing grace he has separated you from your former companions; and while they are left in sin and endless ruin, he has given your title to the inheritance of the saints in light—and all this, that you might possess the spirit necessary to qualify you for the Gospel Ministry. Why have you thus been distinguished and qualified? Is it not that you might devote yourselves to this sacred work? And what hinders you from sharing this glory? You possess the first and most essential qualification; and provisions are now about to be made, we hope on an extensive scale, for carrying you through a course of academical and theological studies. There is a fair prospect, that such of you as possess respectable natural talents, may become Ministers, and useful Ministers, if you are disposed to embrace the opportunity. Let this question then engage your deep and solemn consideration: To what other pursuit do so many and so sacred motives solicit you? Standing as you now do on the point of choosing a profession, whom will you set up for your example? Can a better be found than the

Lord Jesus Christ? That august Personage passed the period of human life on this earth, and took a part in the active scenes of men. And to what profession did he devote himself? To that of preaching the everlasting Gospel to perishing men. Supported by the unequivocal declaration of such an example, may we not confidently pronounce, that human life can be spent in no manner so desirable, so noble, so godlike, as in the labours of the Gospel Ministry? We are aware, that our Saviour is not to be held up as an example, in this respect, to *all* men, since it is obvious that all cannot sustain the Pastoral office; but we are firmly persuaded, that while such an example shows the superior importance of the Gospel Ministry, it ought, under the present necessities of the Church, to have a binding influence upon young men who possess piety and talents, and other qualifications for the sacred work.

In what other way can the powers of the soul be so directly applied to promote the glory of God, and the best interests of men? The Gospel Ministry is the principal mean appointed by heaven to advance the truest happiness of men on earth, and their glory beyond the grave. Those who conduct the interests, and decide the fate of nations, have it, indeed, in their power to confer important benefits on the world. Those whose professional business it is to defend the property and lives of men—those who fill the seats of justice—those who practice the healing art—all claim our respect and gratitude. But in no employment can men render such essential and eminent service to the human race, as in a course of ministerial labours, appointed by God to pluck immortal spirits

as brands from everlasting burnings, to prepare them for the happiness of heaven, and to promote that grand cause for which the world was made, for which the world was redeemed, for which the world is preserved and governed. Could any one of you be the instrument of saving a single soul, he would achieve infinitely more than by subserving the convenience of men in the mechanic arts ; by settling any questions relating to temporal estates ; or by conquering and governing nations. Could any one of you be favored with as much usefulness to the Church as falls to the lot of many faithful Ministers, he might enjoy the thought of having been the instrument of rescuing hundreds from eternal woe, and raising them to everlasting joys. Casting the eye down the ages of eternity, what an incalculable amount of happiness will he have been the means of producing ! Transport yourselves for a moment to the solemnities of the final judgment. Behold a band of blessed spirits, redeemed from death by your instrumentality, shouting salvation, and taking in the prospect of immortal joy, who otherwile would have been crying to rocks and to mountains to cover them—behold them coming to embrace you to pour their thanks into your bosom, and to bend with you, adoring at the throne of God ! — What are now the emotions of your souls ? Would the glitter of wealth, or the glory of empire have filled you with joy like this ? In the light of the final judgment, the importance of all other employments is lost in comparison with the Gospel Ministry, as time is swallowed up in eternity.

Consider further, that this blessed work will furnish you with the best means of your own sanctification.

on and spiritual enjoyment. Engaged ardently and affectionately in this, every day will bring you the delights of a holy sabbath;—and, in the room of other toils, the labour of your life will be in those studies which open the wonders of God to the mind, and in those pleasing exercises which other Christians are thankful for being permitted to enjoy one day in seven. Such a manner of life cannot fail to advance your present peace, and to give a brighter lustre to your immortal crown—a crown in which every soul, redeemed from death by your means, shall constitute a new and splendid jewel. An hundred ages hence you will bless God for having increased the glory of your eternity, by putting you into the Ministry of his Son. Grand and delightful is that promise, *They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.*

Urged by all these motives, come—we affectionately invite you to come, and take part with us in the Ministry of the grace of God. The example of Christ invites you to come—the tears of bereaved Churches, who can find none to break unto them the bread of life, plead with you to come—the miseries of wandering souls, who find none to lead them to heaven, press you to come. Come then, and take part with us in the labours and rewards of the Ministry of reconciliation!

We conclude, with a short address

To Pious Parents.

Who among you have any Sons to devote to Christ for the service of his sanctuary? Who among you have any young Samuels, the children of prayer,

whom you have lent unto the Lord with ardent desires, that as long as they live they may be the Lord's? Can you better dispose of them than by training them up for the Gospel Ministry, to bear the vessels of Him to whose service you have solemnly consecrated them in baptism? Would it not fill you with sublime joy to know that you had brought children into the world to be the instruments of large accessions to the assembly of the redeemed, to the everlasting kingdom of Messiah? When a numerous company of celestial spirits should hail you as the blessed parents of the beloved instruments of their salvation, would you not feel greater joy than you would have done in beholding your sons seated on earthly thrones, encircled with the wreaths of fame? If you love your pious sons, give them to the Church, and increase their everlasting happiness. If you love your Saviour, whose bowels yearned and bled for you, from your own bowels give him Ministers—give to his service those whom he died to redeem, to soothe and comfort your parental hearts. If each of you can give a pious Minister to the Church, the whole Church will have reason to thank God for your existence, and you yourselves may bless him forever that you have not lived in vain.

Brethren, farewell. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits! Amen.

Signed by Order of the Presbytery.

LEONARD PRATHER, MODERATOR.
JAMES H. BOWMAN, CLERK.

BUFFALOE, MOORE COUNTY }
May 5, 1806,



